

PRESIDENT: The motion is to return LB 60 to Select File for the Pirsch amendment. Is there further discussion? Senator Wiitala.

SENATOR WIITALA: Mr. President, members of the body, of course I am rising in objection to this amendment, Senator Pirsch, and largely I guess I am rather thankful that the amendment was made this morning because once again we can clarify the intent of LB 60. Now Senator Pirsch would have us or have those doctors that were removing a cornea from a deceased person get in contact with the decedent's will somehow and that would probably largely take the form of a will. Now I would hope that if there was a will that the decedent's next of kin would be aware of it but the reason, the reason for the necessity of this legislation is that that tissue, the cornea, does not last very long. It only lasts for about four or five hours, and even though Nebraska has 80,000 donors, the trouble is that that tissue has to come from young persons, someone who has died at a young age because of a heart attack or in an accident. Now I want you as members to think about this for a minute, that even if a person had donated their eyes, their cornea, to be transplanted to someone who is blind, imagine the complications in getting that tissue; first of all finding a surgeon to remove it; secondly, a hospital to transfer it to; and thirdly, a donor to receive it. Presently Nebraska has to depend upon 80% of its corneas from other states, largely coming from as long a ways as Maryland. The trouble with LB 60 is it gets caught up in the controversy of organ transplants. We are not transplanting an organ. We are not transplanting an eye. We are not transplanting a heart. We are just simply taking a piece of tissue, the clear tissue, that covers the pupil, the iris of your eye, no different than if we would take a fingernail or take a piece of skin off of your finger. Once again, members, I want you to remember that the necessity of this is whether people can receive eyesight. Some individuals it not only takes one cornea transplant but some of them have three and four. It is that delicate an operation. For those corneas that come in from out of state, they have to be frozen. In Nebraska most of the hospitals do not have that kind of intensive capital in order to freeze a cornea for a long period of time. It has to be a quick transfer on an implant. I know that some of you have some concerns, especially those that were voiced by Jim Cunningham of the Nebraska Catholic Conference. I think his concerns are legitimate especially when it comes to transferring organs and he is afraid that we will open the door to all kinds of organ transplants without permission. In this case, in